

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this Application and entry of this Amendment is respectfully requested. Claims 1, and 6-18 are pending, with 1 and 6 being the independent claims. Claim 6 has been amended and claims 2-5 have been canceled without disclaimer of or prejudice to the subject matter thereof. In view of the following remarks, favorable consideration and allowance of the application is respectfully requested.

Examiner Interview October 4, 2007

Applicant appreciates the courtesy extended to Applicant and Applicant's representative during the interview held on October 4, 2007. The Interview Summary (Paper No. 20071004) accurately reflects the substance of the interview and is incorporated by reference herein.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejections

Claims 2-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by USPN 5,833,672 to Kawata et al. Applicants have canceled claims 2-5 rendering moot the rejection thereof.

Claims 6, 9-12, 17 and 18 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Kawata et al. Applicants have amended independent claim 6 to clarify that the first reinforcing member has a partial annulus cross-section, which as noted in the Interview Summary, overcomes this rejection of the claim. Applicants aver that claim 6 is now in condition for allowance. Claims 9-12, 17 and 18 depend from and add further features to independent claim 6 and are patentable for that reason alone. While it is not necessary to address the Examiner's rejection of the dependent claims at this time, Applicants reserve the right to support their patentability, when necessary.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejections

Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kawata et al. in view of USPN 4,988,356 to Crittenden et al. As noted in the Interview Summary, agreement was reached with respect to the patentability of claim 1 over the combination of Kawata and Crittenden et al.

Claims 7 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kawata et al. Claims 7 and 8 depend from and add further features to independent claim 6, which as discussed above is patentable over the Kawata et al., and thus are patentable for that reason

alone. While it is not necessary to address the Examiner's rejection of the dependent claims at this time, Applicants reserve the right to support their patentability, when necessary.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 13-16 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but allowable if rewritten in independent form. However, independent claim 6 from which these claims depend is now in condition for allowance and thus dependent claims 13-16 are also in condition for allowance without being re-presented in independent form.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants believe all the pending claims are in condition for allowance and should be passed to issue. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required under 37 C.F.R. §1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 01-2525. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference would in any way expedite the prosecution of the application, please do not hesitate to call the undersigned at telephone (707) 543-0221.

Respectfully submitted,

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